

PERFECT PANTHERS



**Daniel Picart Runs for Two TDs
in the Fourth Quarter Saturday
to Lift Undefeated Pleasantville
Past Nanuet for the Class B Title**

Sports

Fourth-Quarter Eruption Lifts the Panthers to the Class B Title

By Andy Jacobs

With the football in Daniel Picart's hands, opposing teams are quickly discovering the Pleasantville Panthers have no trouble saving their best for last.

For the second week in a row, the sophomore sensation took command of a tight playoff game in the fourth quarter on Saturday evening, jolting a struggling offense to life and running for a pair of touchdowns. This time, his late-game heroics helped lift the Panthers to a 23-7 victory over Nanuet on the biggest of local stages, the Section 1, Class B championship game under the lights at Arlington High School.

"Daniel Picart does not play like a sophomore," said Panthers head coach Tony Becerra after witnessing the game MVP's latest rousing performance. "He plays with the confidence and ability you would only expect out of a senior. He thrives in big spots and doesn't shy away from the challenge."

Picart's two nine-yard touchdown runs, one early in the fourth quarter and the other midway through it, enabled the Panthers to storm from behind to defeat the Golden Knights and remain unbeaten this season at 10-0. Pleasantville now moves on to the state tournament and will face Section 9 champion Port Jervis on Saturday afternoon at Middletown's Faller Field in the first round of regionals.

"This season was somewhat unexpected because of so many unknowns after a shortened spring season and going 3-6 the prior season," said Becerra, who has now guided the Panthers to four sectional titles. "But even though the team surpassed expectations, we all didn't want this ride to end."

For a while, though, it seemed the Panthers' ride just might be coming to an end at the hands of Nanuet. A 30-yard field-goal attempt by John McCarthy caromed off the left upright in the final minute of the first quarter, keeping the game scoreless. Late in the second quarter, a Panther fumble at their own 9-yard line set the Golden Knights



Erik Coleman returns a kick for the Panthers during the Class B title game at Arlington High School.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Pleasantville's Daniel Picart carries the football, with teammate Michael Gordon providing blocking nearby, during the second half of the Section 1, Class B championship game.

up for a one-yard touchdown run by James Moran three plays later.

As the teams left the field for the halftime break, the Panthers found themselves facing a 7-0 deficit against a foe that arrived with an 8-1 record this season. According to Becerra, the message to his players at intermission was simple.

"Don't panic," he told them. "Put your trust in what we've been doing all year. And that's what we did."

Just three plays into the second half, the Panthers got the kind of break they had been waiting for all evening. Senior defensive back Dom Matica recovered a Nanuet fumble at the Golden Knights' 23-yard line. But even though Picart, running the Wildcat offense, scampered for 10 yards on first down, Pleasantville soon had to settle for another field-goal try, a 28-yarder for McCarthy that split the uprights and finally got the Panthers on the scoreboard nearly five minutes into the third quarter.

Nanuet responded by moving the football on its next possession all the way to the Panthers' 33-yard line. But on fourth-and-two, Moran was stopped for no gain. The Panthers took over with three minutes left in the third quarter, determined to find the end zone for the first time against the Golden Knights.

They ran six plays before the quarter ended, five of them carries by senior running back Kieran Cotter, who along with Picart finished the contest with 103 yards on the ground. The fourth quarter began with P'ville faced with a fourth-and-one at the Nanuet 48, but with Picart now running the Wildcat for good.

Keeping the ball himself, Picart ran toward the right sideline, losing it for an instant before grabbing it again and finally being tackled after a 14-yard gain. On the next play, he went left for 18 more yards, down to the 16-yard line. Then came a seven-yard run by Picart before he capped the 67-yard

drive with a hesitation move that got him past a pair of would-be tacklers at the line of scrimmage and then into the end zone. McCarthy added the extra point and the Panthers had their first lead of the night, 10-7, with 10:36 remaining in the game.

The Pleasantville defense was not about to give up a lead it took over three quarters to earn. Nanuet went backwards on its next possession, quickly going three-and-out. Picart took the line-drive punt just inside midfield and returned it to the Nanuet 32-yard line. Four plays later, he followed his



Pleasantville senior linebacker Ryan Raefski celebrates after making a big defensive play in Saturday's title win over Nanuet.

blockers to the left, got to the outside and easily crossed the goal line from nine yards out. With just 5:58 to go, the Panthers' lead was suddenly up to 17-7.

"In my opinion, our defense pitched a shutout because of the turnover by the offense deep in their territory," said Becerra. "Coach George LaMar did an outstanding job with the defense all year, and especially this week where they bent a little bit, but

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Pleasantville senior quarterback Michael LaCapria leaves Nanuet's Luke Flanagan and Dylan Martini behind as he runs with the ball in the Panthers' 23-7 win in the sectional final on Saturday evening.

Sports



Junior linebacker Cooper Kittsley was named the game's Most Outstanding Lineman following the 23-7 title win over Nanuet.

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never broke. They pitched a shutout in a championship game, which is unbelievable."

The Golden Knights' last hopes were dashed when their next drive stalled at the Pleasantville 48-yard line with just over four minutes left on the clock. On first down, Picart raced for 12 more yards before turning the Wildcat offense over to Cotter, who scooted right on the next play for another 12 yards. With 1:14 to go, Cotter scored from a yard out, completing the Panthers' fourth-quarter eruption.

"I'm so happy that we were able to get Kieran in there and get a score," said Becerra, "because from early in our season, Kieran was our workhorse in the backfield. I'm glad to see him finish this game like that."



Head coach Tony Becerra directs the Panthers in Saturday's championship game, a 23-7 win for his fourth sectional title at the Panthers' helm.



Pleasantville senior running back Kieran Cotter proudly holds the newest addition to the Panthers' trophy case following the Class B title game.

So now, with the Class B championship plaque and the gold football trophy set to be displayed soon in the gym lobby, the attention of the team turns to the Raiders from Orange County, who trounced Red Hook in the Section 9 final this past weekend. It's been a special run for Pleasantville so far, and Becerra knows his players want it to last a bit longer.

"In this postseason," he said, "we've seen the will and determination of this team to not let it end."



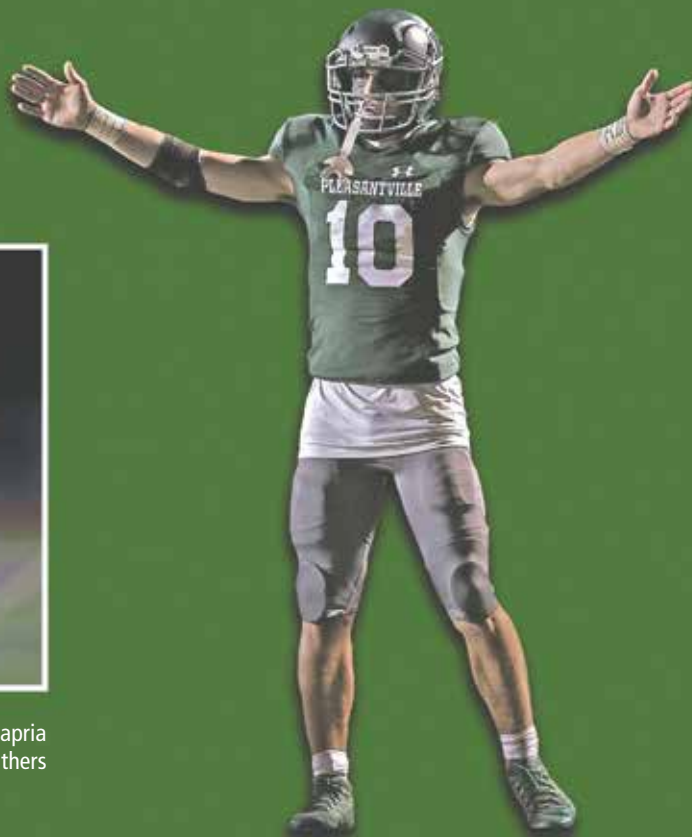
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Champion Panthers



Pleasantville seniors Dom Matica (left) and Michael LaCapria pose with the championship plaque after the Panthers defeated Nanuet in the Class B championship game.



The Panthers' Daniel Picart celebrates after teammate Kieran Cotter scored the clinching touchdown in Saturday's title game.

Sports

Eagles' Ground Game is Too Much for Valhalla in Class C Final

By Andy Jacobs

The dynamic duo of Brian Dann and Robert Sanzo proved to be too much of an obstacle for the Valhalla football team in Saturday afternoon's Section 1, Class C championship game.

On a rainy, windswept day at Arlington High School, the inside-outside combo for undefeated Dobbs Ferry accumulated 400 yards on the ground as the Eagles overwhelmed the Vikings 41-14 in a contest that was suspended for two hours by lightning midway through the second quarter. Dann finished up with 215 yards and four touchdowns, punishing the Vikings time and again with his bruising carries.

"He definitely wore us down," conceded Vikings head coach Art Troilo Jr. shortly after his team's championship quest had come to a disappointing end. "He's an outstanding football player. He's a big, strong, physical kid, but Sanzo was a difference maker. He wasn't even there last year. We couldn't stop them. The better team won. I give all the credit in the world to them."

The Vikings, who finished the season with a 6-4 record, were still within two touchdowns late in the third quarter and driving deep into Eagle territory when a lost fumble shattered their comeback hopes. Dobbs Ferry then sealed the Vikings' fate when Dann rumbled 47 yards for a touchdown on the first play of the fourth quarter.

"You know, we were down 28-14 and we fumbled the ball on a first down inside the 15. So that was a killer," said Troilo. "I thought the game was closer than the score. Obviously the better team won, but we drove the ball down inside the 15 and didn't score and then we drove the ball around the 10 and we fumbled on a first down. You have to score to keep up with them."

The game had begun with Valhalla managing to stop the Eagles' long opening drive at the Viking 22-yard line. But on first down, quarterback Michael Dawson dropped back to pass with a howling wind at his



Valhalla quarterback Michael Dawson throws the ball on the run during Saturday's Class C championship game.

back and overthrew Je'Caryous Poteat near the right sideline. Dobbs Ferry's Johnatan Almaras intercepted the ball and returned it for a touchdown. With 6:12 to go in the first quarter, Valhalla found itself behind 7-0.

But the Vikings answered with a 10-play, 64-yard drive, getting into the end zone when Dawson connected over the middle to a wide-open Poteat on fourth-and-six for a 23-yard touchdown. The point-after from Andres Osorio tied the game at 7-7 with just eight seconds remaining in the opening quarter.

Dobbs Ferry was 10 plays into a drive that had begun at its own 15-yard line when play was interrupted by the brutal weather that had been forecast to arrive early in the afternoon. When the teams finally emerged back on the field after the lengthy delay, it was the Eagles who quickly gained the upper hand. Three consecutive running plays, all by Dann, concluded the drive and the five-yard TD run with 5:31 to go in the half gave Dobbs a lead it wouldn't relinquish.

Valhalla quickly went three-and-out and the Eagles soon found the end zone again. Dann rumbled for 38 yards on first down all the way to the Vikings' 1-yard line. He then



Basiaka Butcher of Valhalla tries to make a catch in traffic in the second half of the Vikings' loss to Dobbs Ferry in the Class C championship game.



Valhalla players stand together dejectedly during the postgame awards ceremony following Saturday's 41-14 loss in the Class C title game.

burrowed his way over the goal line and the PAT from Almaras increased the Dobbs Ferry advantage to 21-7 with 2:16 left before halftime.

The Vikings responded with a six-play, 66-yard drive in less than two minutes, scoring their second touchdown of the game when Dawson lofted a pass into the end zone beyond a trio of Eagle backs and into the hands of Devan Cooper. The point-after kick by Osorio narrowed the Valhalla deficit to 21-14 at halftime.

But that was as close as the Vikings would come. Dobbs Ferry marched 70 yards in eight plays on its first drive of the second half. Dann capped it by rumbling 34 yards for his third touchdown of the day, carrying three Valhalla defenders into the end zone with him. Soon came the Vikings' fumble near the Eagles' 10-yard line with 2:46 left in the third quarter, all but dashing their hopes

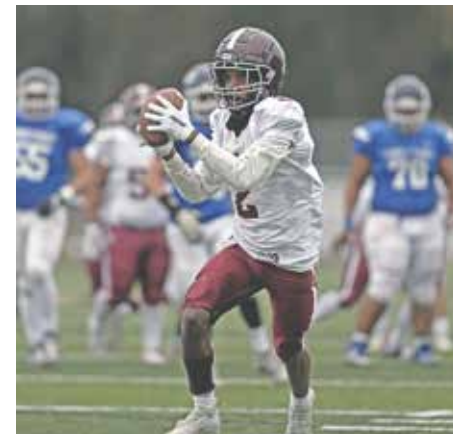


Valhalla sophomore Robert Foisset finds some room to run in Saturday afternoon's championship game against unbeaten Dobbs Ferry.

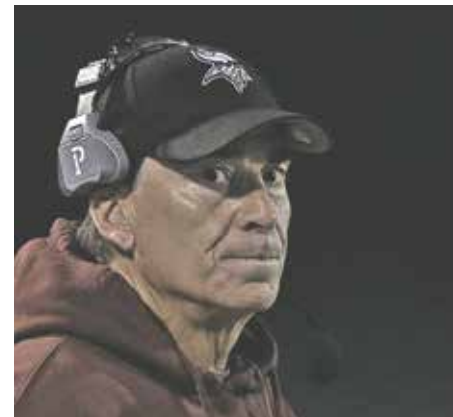
of playing in this Saturday's state regional against Section 9 champion James I. O'Neill.

For Valhalla fans, it was the last time they'll see Dawson, who helped lead the team to the 2019 sectional title over Dobbs Ferry, barking out signals in a Viking uniform.

"He's a great leader and a great player, and he's gonna be missed," said Troilo about his star who earned the game's Most Outstanding Back award. "It's a strange situation because all our receivers are juniors and the quarterback's a senior. We'll go home and go to sleep for a while and figure it out as we move forward."



Je'Caryous Poteat catches the football near the end zone and runs in for a 23-yard Valhalla touchdown at the end of the first quarter in the sectional final vs. Dobbs Ferry.



Valhalla head coach Art Troilo casts a wary eye toward the scoreboard clock in the fourth quarter of the sectional final vs. Dobbs Ferry.



The Vikings' Devan Cooper runs with the football in Saturday's Class C title game at Arlington High School.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

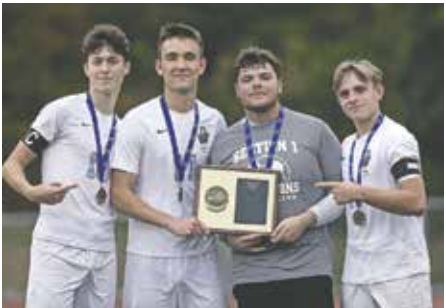
Sports



Martin Sunjic battles in the air during the Section 1, Class B championship game vs. Irvington at Lakeland High School.



Goalkeeper Francesco Michilli slides to make a save in the Wildcats' win under the lights at Valhalla in mid-October.



Westlake seniors, left to right, Isaiah Ortiz, Martin Sunjic, Francesco Michilli and Gianluca Ruggiero proudly display the Class B championship plaque after defeating Irvington at Lakeland High School.



The Wildcats' Gianluca Ruggiero races after the ball during the 2-1 win over Irvington in the Class B title game. He scored both of the Westlake goals.

WESTLAKE WILDCATS 2021

Section 1, Class B Champion New York State Semifinalist



Senior forward Alex Guaman controls the ball during a Wildcat home game.



The Wildcats' Kristian Shkreli makes the biggest defensive play of the sectional final vs. Irvington, kicking the ball away from the goal line just in time to preserve a 2-1 lead.



The Wildcats' Isaiah Ortiz boots the ball across the field in a victory over visiting Pawling.



Sophomore defenseman Dylan Pray gets set to kick the ball upfield in the Wildcats' victory over Irvington in the sectional final.



Westlake players, left to right, Dominic DeVito, Luca Mulhare and Roberto Molina try to thwart an Irvington scoring chance in the Class B championship game.



Westlake sophomore Thomas Lyden scans the field as he dribbles during the Wildcats' 1-0 win over Section 9 champ Marlboro in the state playoffs.



Dominic DeVito heads the ball in the sectional final vs. Irvington.

Sports



Briarcliff's Sora Marable heads the ball in the Bears' playoff win over Irvington.



Gianna Eglau of Westlake tries to run past Briarcliff's Sora Marable in a game hosted by the Bears.



Westlake players, left to right, Krista Dronzek, Alexandra Gjakaj and Jillian Raguso form a defensive wall during a game at Briarcliff.



Grace Corelli of Byram Hills speeds her way to the goal during a Bobcat home game.

GIRLS' SOCCER 2021 *A Look Back*



aura Malichio of Fox Lane boots the ball away during a victory vs. visiting Carmel.



Horace Greeley's Erica Rosendorf pursues the ball across the field in a Quaker home playoff game in late October.



Westlake goalkeeper Morgan Leitch races to her right to make a save.



Ramsey Edson of Greeley heads for the goal during the Quakers' playoff victory over visiting Yorktown.



Pleasantville's Molly Baxter gets control of the ball in the Mt. Pleasant Cup championship game vs. Briarcliff.



Gabriella Chioccola of Briarcliff moves upfield during the title game of the Mt. Pleasant Cup in early September.



Byram Hills' Remi Berliner sends a pass to a teammate vs. visiting Pelham.

Sports



Fox Lane's Adrianna Nikprelaj dribbles up the right sideline during a late September game.



Scarlett Pfistner of Byram Hills controls the ball near midfield in a home game vs. Pelham.



Maddie Braverman of Pleasantville settles the ball in front of Briarcliff's Sophia Zielinski.



Greeley's Hallie Rackoff searches for a teammate to pass to as she controls the ball in the playoff win over Yorktown.



Briarcliff senior Arianna Vizcaino controls the ball in a game against host Pleasantville.



Briarcliff goalie Dylan Zednik clears the ball in the Bears' playoff victory over Irvington.



Pleasantville sophomore midfielder Jess Beck races for the ball in the Panthers' home playoff win over Dobbs Ferry.



Pleasantville senior goalkeeper Heather Vamossy grabs the ball just in time to thwart a Briarcliff scoring chance.



Fox Lane's Alexandra Griffin takes the ball up the field in the Foxes' home win over Carmel.

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VIKING QUEST ENDS



**Quarterback Michael Dawson Throws
During Valhalla's Loss to Dobbs Ferry
in the Class C Championship Game
on a Stormy Saturday up at Arlington**